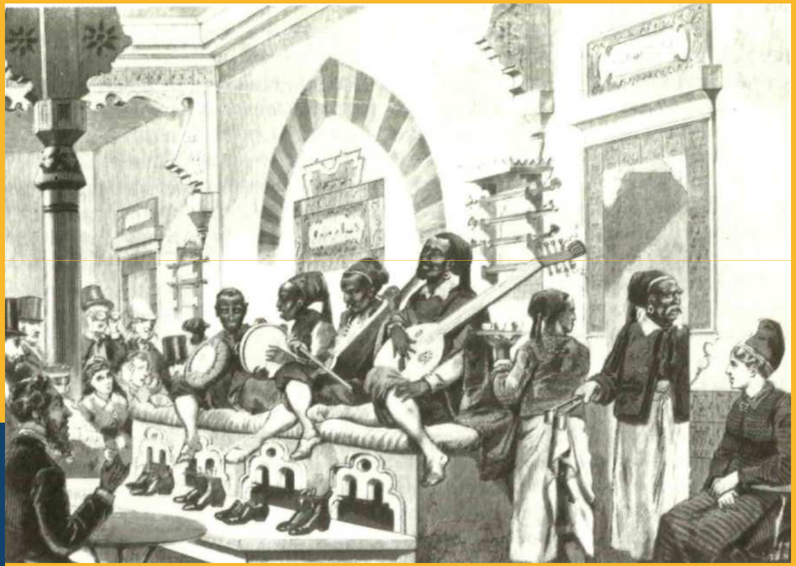
Nationalist and Exotic Voices

Lecture 11 | Music in the Classical and Romantic Eras MCGY2612



23 May 2011
Dr David Larkin | Lecturer in Music

Tunisian Musicians at the 1878 Paris exhibition
Source: Dahlhaus 1989: 303

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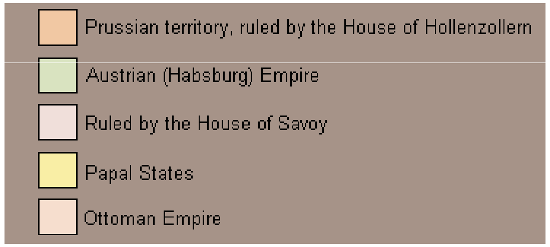
EUROPE IN 1815-1848

Burkholder 2010: 596

EUROPE IN 1848



http://www.fsmitha.com/h3/map36pol.html

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EUROPE IN 1890

http://www.history-map.com/picture/001/Europe-1890s-in.htm

NATIONALISM: COMMON TERMS

- Nation: Any large aggregate of communities and individuals defined by some mixture of geographical, ethnic, social (linguistic, religious), historical and political factors
- State: A political term, referring to a self-governing people; a sovereign geopolitical entity defined by territorial integrity. Many different forms of governance are possible
- Nation state: An independent political state formed from a people who share a common national identity (historically, culturally, or ethnically)
- Country: The territory or land of a nation; usually an independent state, or a region once independent and still distinct in race, language, institutions, or historical memories
- Race: A group of people connected by common descent or origin; a group of people of shared ethnicity or with biological commonalities
- Autochthonous: Native to the soil, aboriginal, indigenous

Sources: *OED* online; Richard Taruskin, ‘Nationalism’, *New Grove Online*

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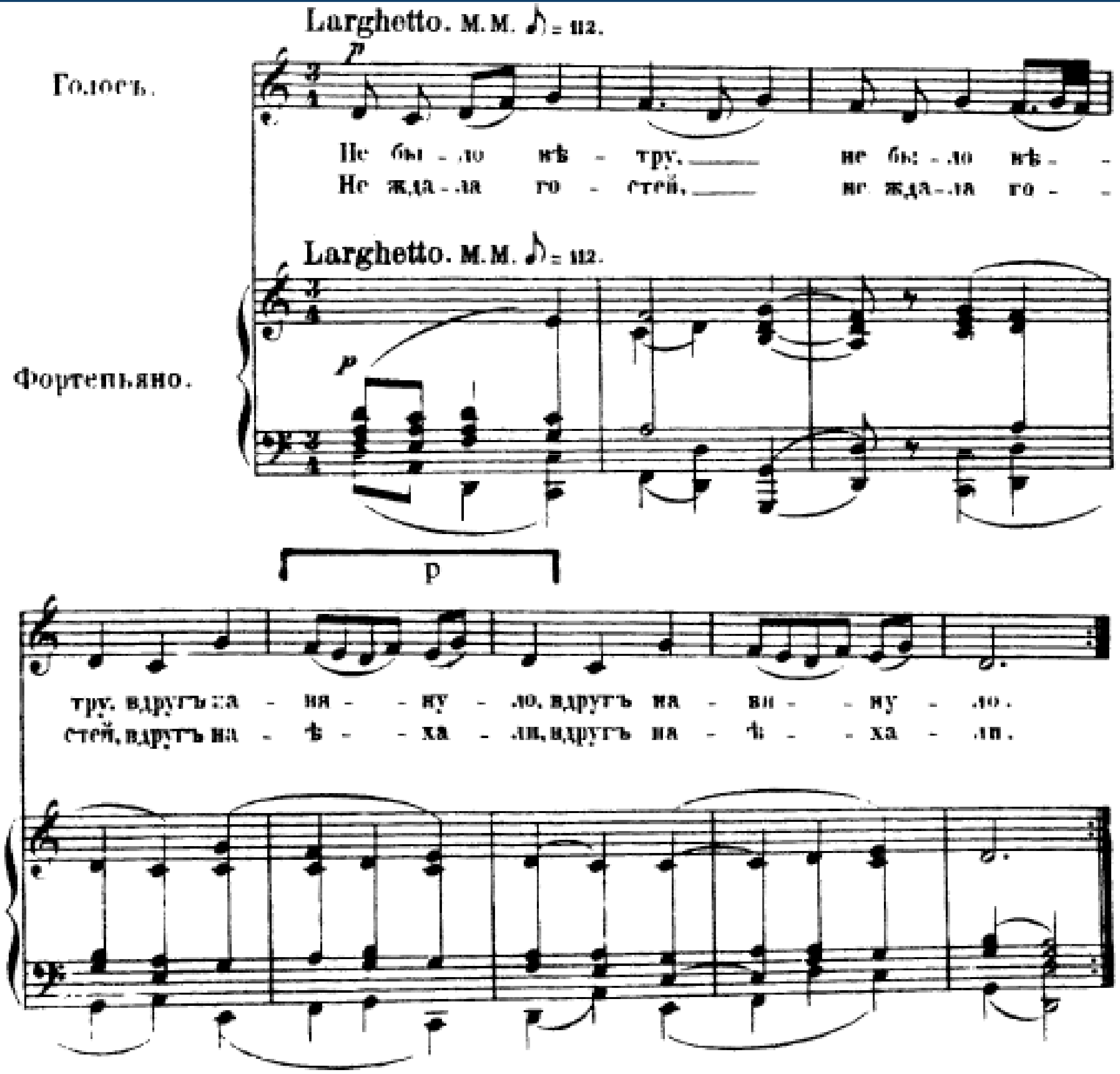
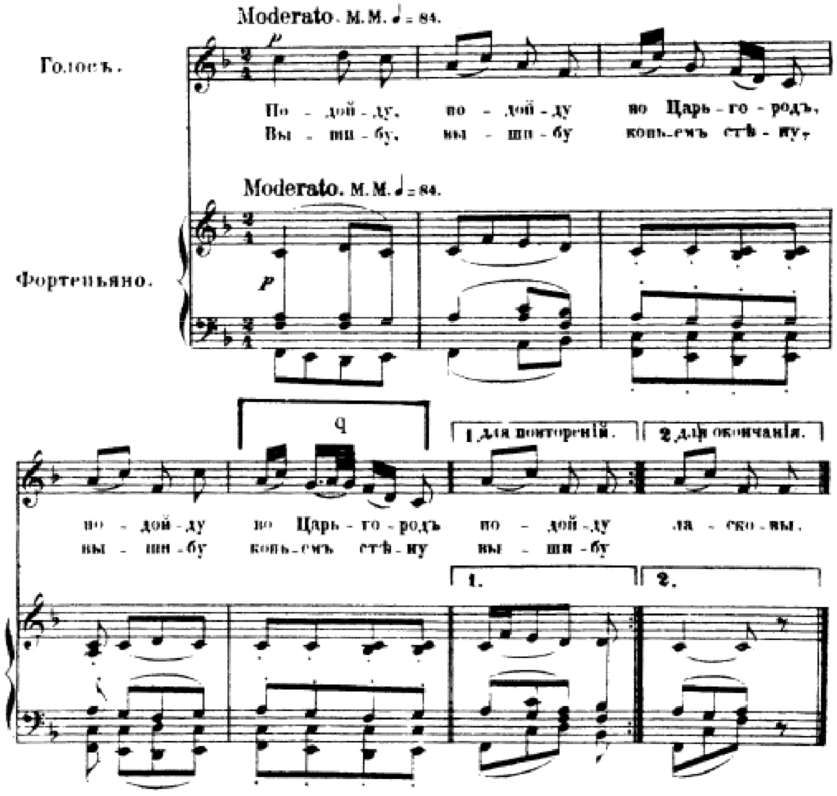
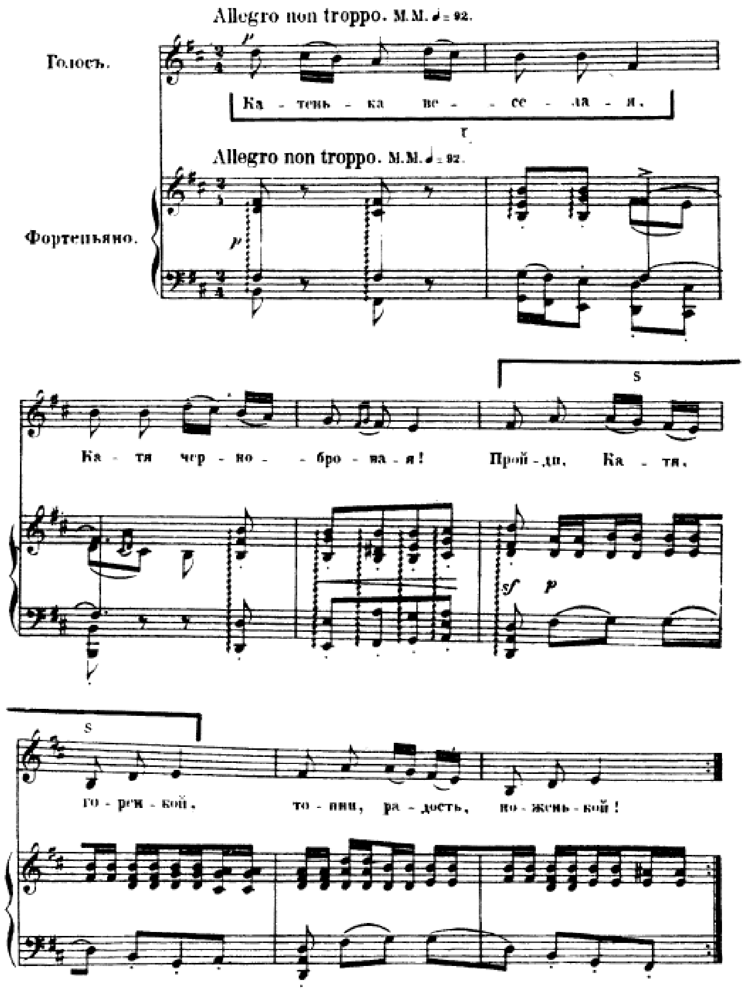
BALAKIREV’S FOLKTUNE HARMONIZATIONS

Mili Balakirev



BALAKIREV’S FOLKTUNE HARMONIZATIONS



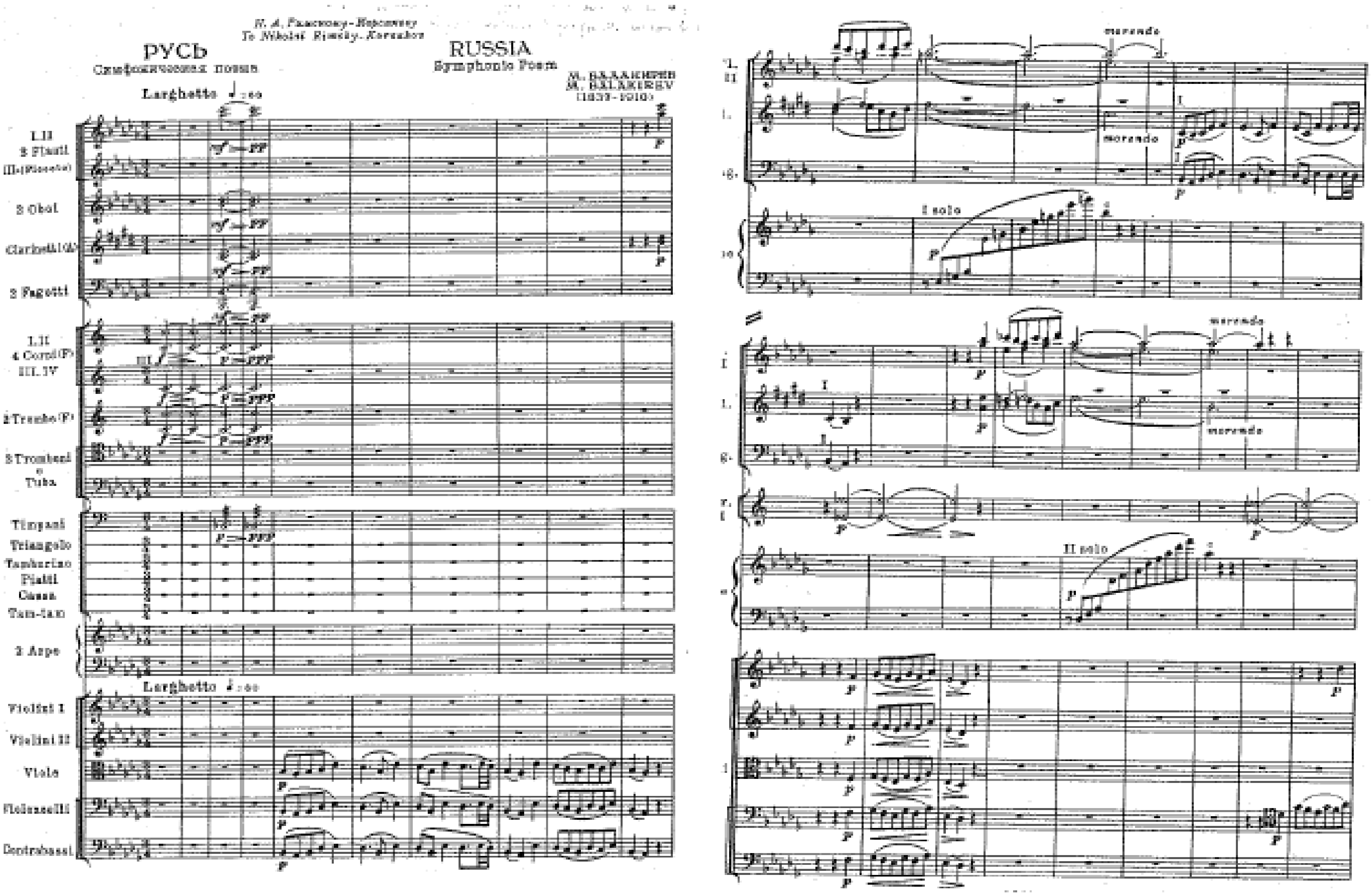


CHARACTERISTICS OF RUSSIAN MUSIC

- Use of natural (min 6th & 7th degrees [Aeolian]) and Russian (maj 6th, min 7th degrees [Dorian]) minor scales
- Use of dual 'tonic' schemes (*peremennost*); the alternative tonal centre could be the relative major or minor, or alternatively the 'flattened seventh' in the minor mode
- Avoidance of secondary dominants and harmonic minor idioms
- Emphasis on plagal (subdominant) rather than dominant-directed motion
- (Resulting from previous points) Sense of harmonic stasis rather than tonally directed progressions familiar from Western music, leading to the impression of static sound-sheets (*Klangfläche*)
- Cultivation of ostinato, repetition and variation in place of Germanic developmental dialectics
- Cultivation of sonority, including high sustained pedal notes, pizz strings against sustained woodwind, use of percussion and harp
- Symmetrical divisions of the octave (augmented, diminished sonorities) as structural building blocks. Also the octatonic scale (alternating tones and semitones, formed from the intersection of two diminished 7ths)

Richard Taruskin, 'How the acorn took root: A tale of Russia', *19th-Century Music* Vol. 6/3 (Spring 1983): 189-212

SECOND OVERTURE ON RUSSIAN THEMES



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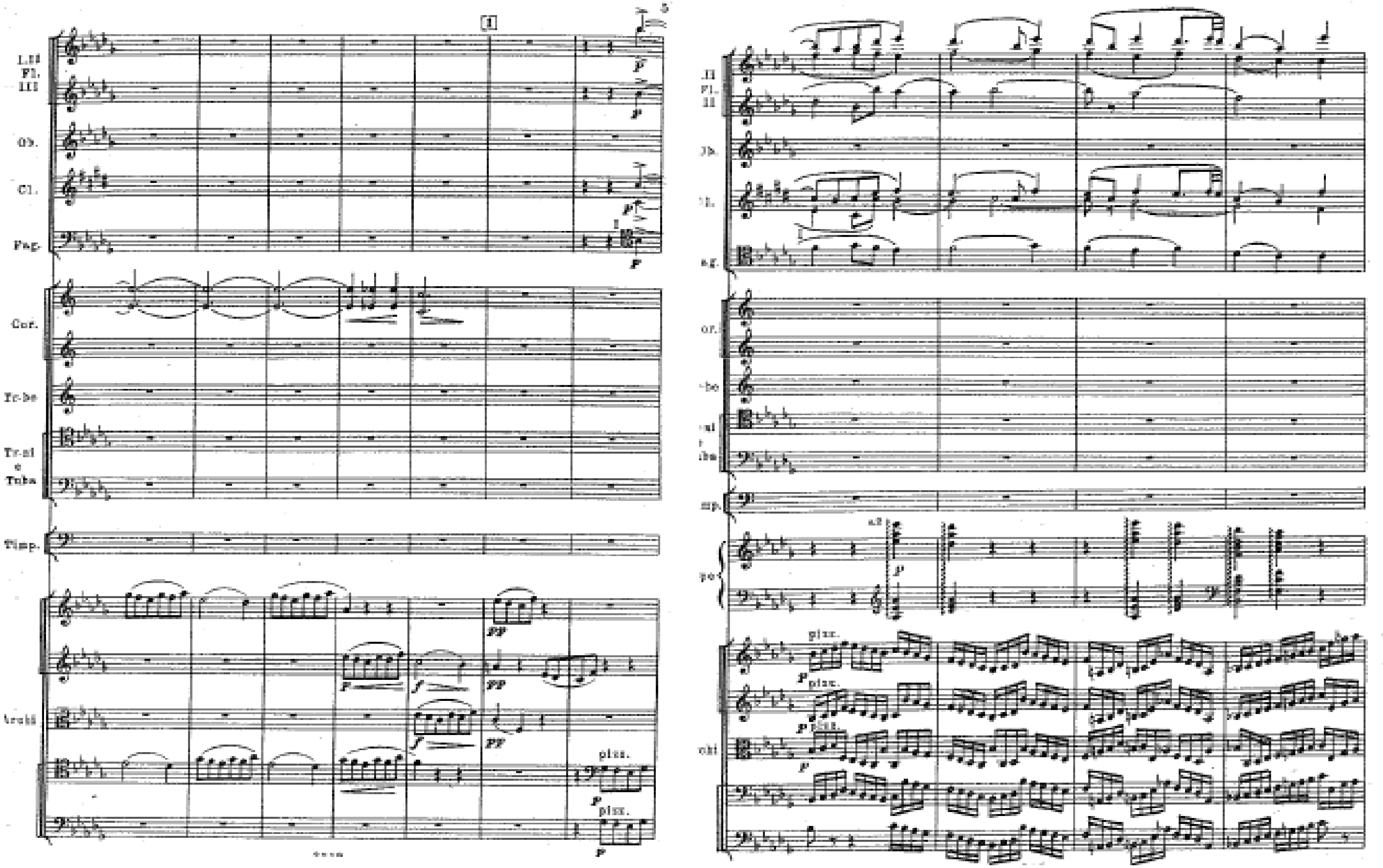

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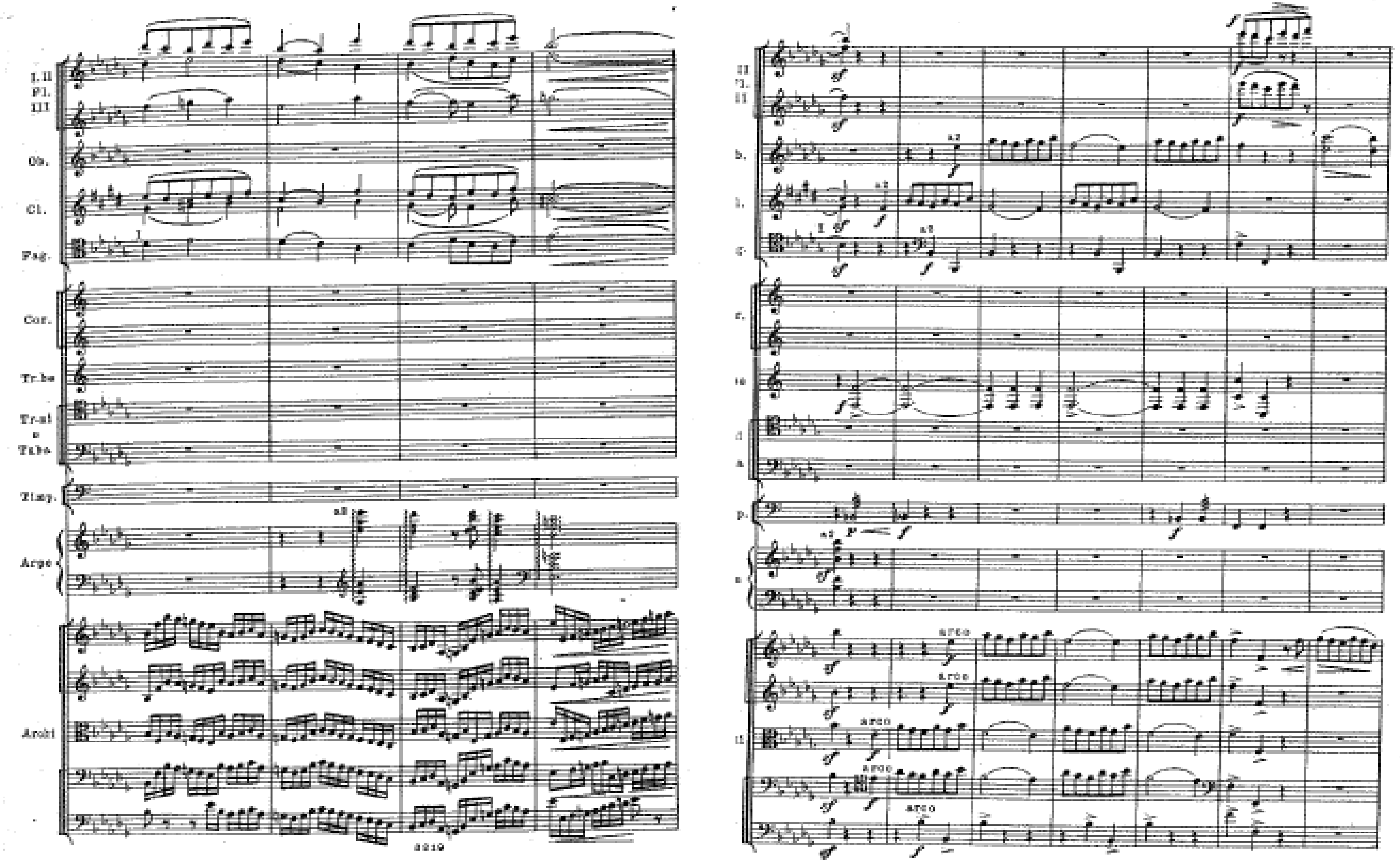

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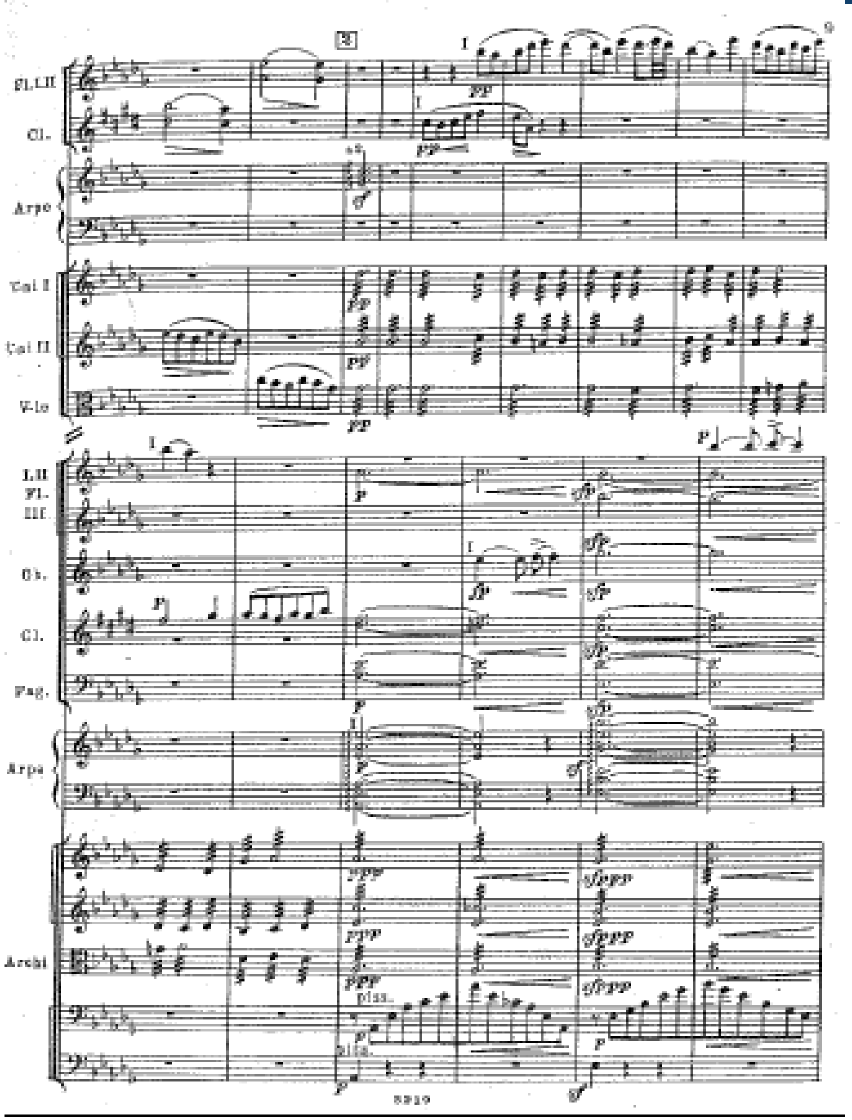
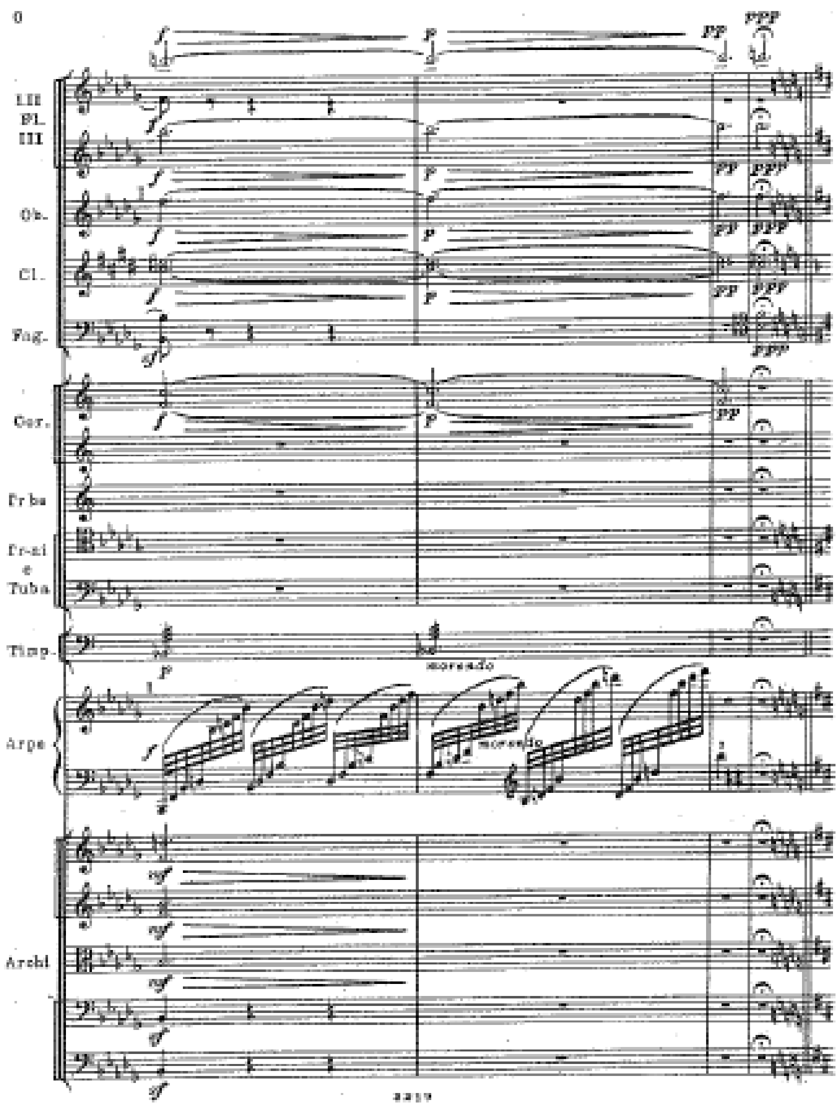




THE ‘NEW RUSSIAN SCHOOL’

Vladimir, Vasilievich Stasov, ‘On Russian Music in the last 25 years’ (1883)

- Beginning with Glinka, the Russian school of composers has been distinguished by its complete independence of thought and scepticism towards musical creations of the past. […] They will give credence to no tradition until they have themselves been persuaded of the value of that which they are supposed to esteem (391)
- The best Russian musicians beginning with Glinka have never set much store by academic training […] They reject all dry academicism and pedantry (391)
- Another important feature [is] its striving for national character. The historical and cultural conditions of other nations have been such that folk song – the expression of the spontaneous, unaffected musicality of the people – has long since all but vanished in civilized countries. Who in the nineteenth century knows or hears French, German, Italian or English folk songs? […] In our country it is an altogether different story. Folk songs fill the air everywhere to this day. […] no sooner had talk of native things arisen in life and in literature , no sooner had interest in them been rekindled, than talented individuals immediately appeared on the scene ready to create music in the idioms most congenial and most dear to them, that is, in Russian folksong (391-2)

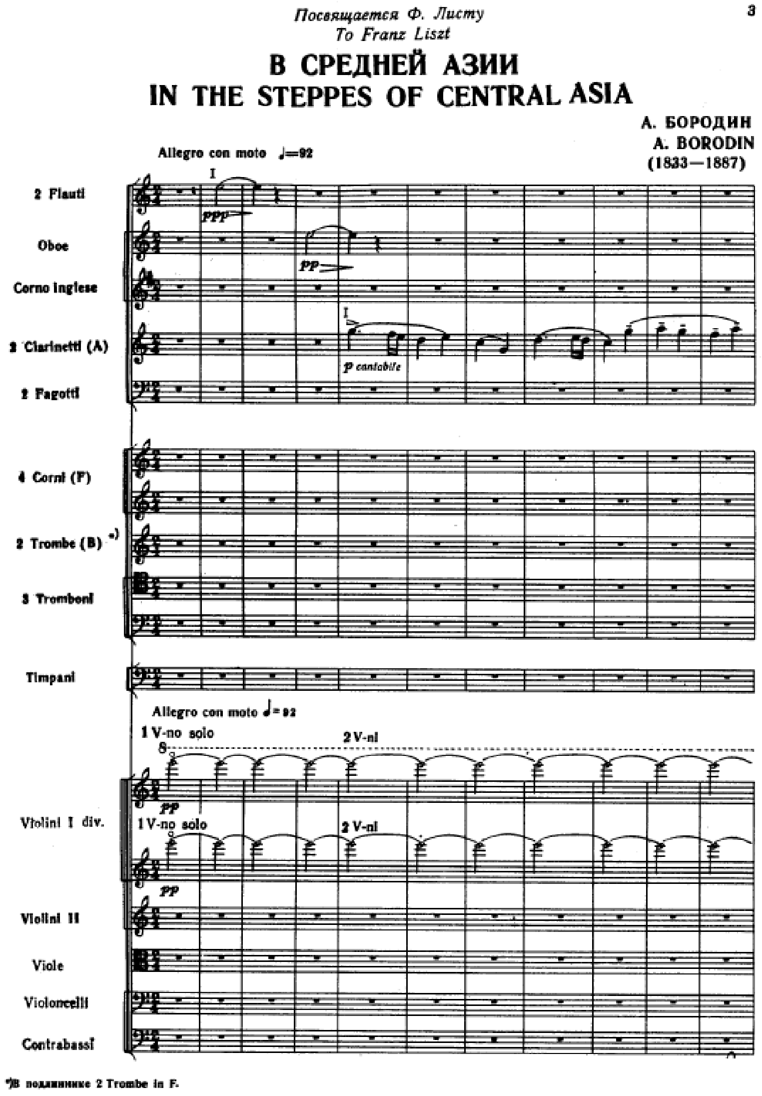
Stasov, ‘The “New Russian School”’, in Weiss/Taruskin 1984: 390-394

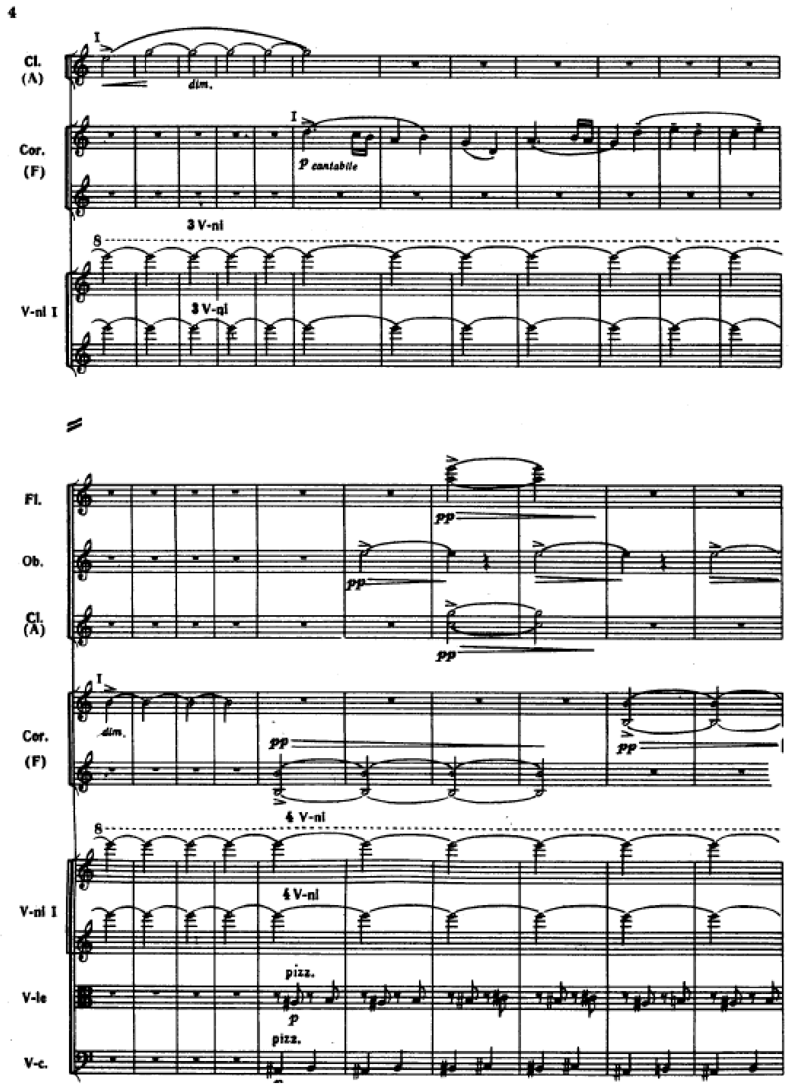
THE ‘NEW RUSSIAN SCHOOL’

Vladimir, Vasilievich Stasov, ‘On Russian Music in the last 25 years’ (1883)

- Along with the national Russian element, there is another by which the New Russian School is distinguished. This is the Oriental element. Nowhere else in Europe does it play so conspicuous a role as it does among musicians. […] It is a different matter with the musicians of the New Russian School. Some of them have actually seen the East (Glinka and Balakirev, who spent some time in the Caucasus), while others, though they never went there, were surrounded all their lives with impressions of the Orient and therefore reproduced them distinctly and vividly. (393)
- Finally, one more feature strongly characterizes the musicians of the New Russian School, and that is their extreme inclination towards ‘program music’. […] What Glinka began has been continued by his successors and adherents. Practically without exception Russian symphonic music is programmatic. One cannot help noticing the inclination that the inclination toward program music is much stronger with us than almost anywhere else in Europe. (393-4)

BORODIN, *IN CENTRAL ASIA*





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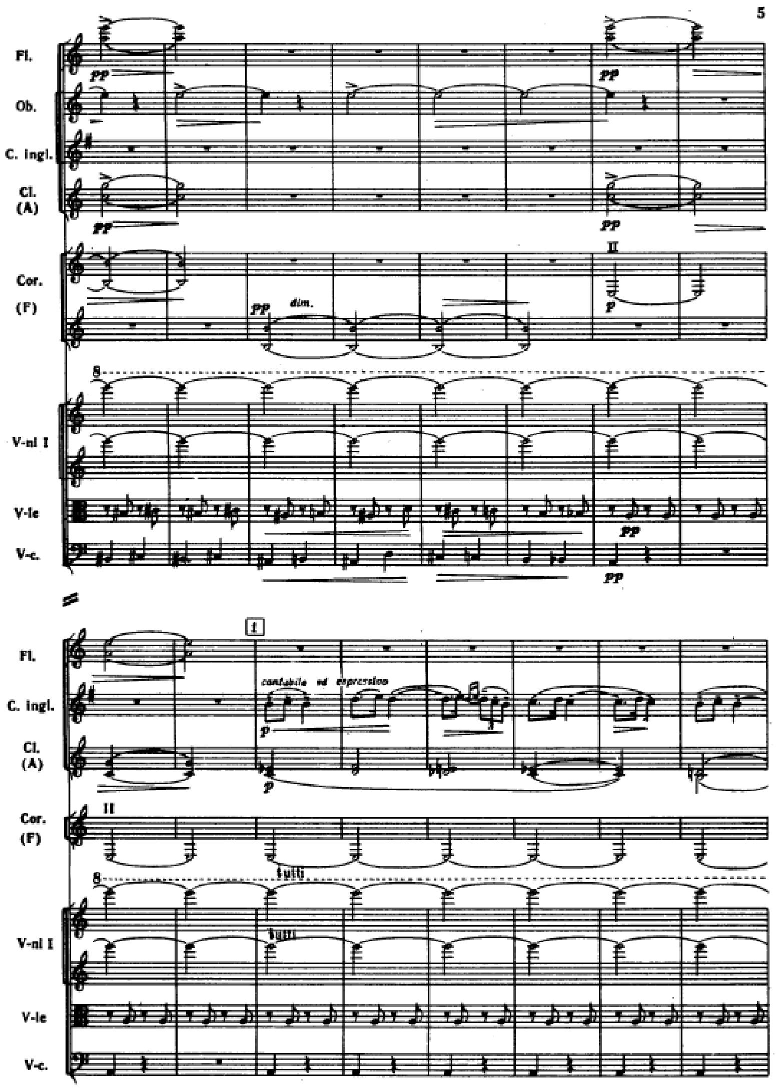

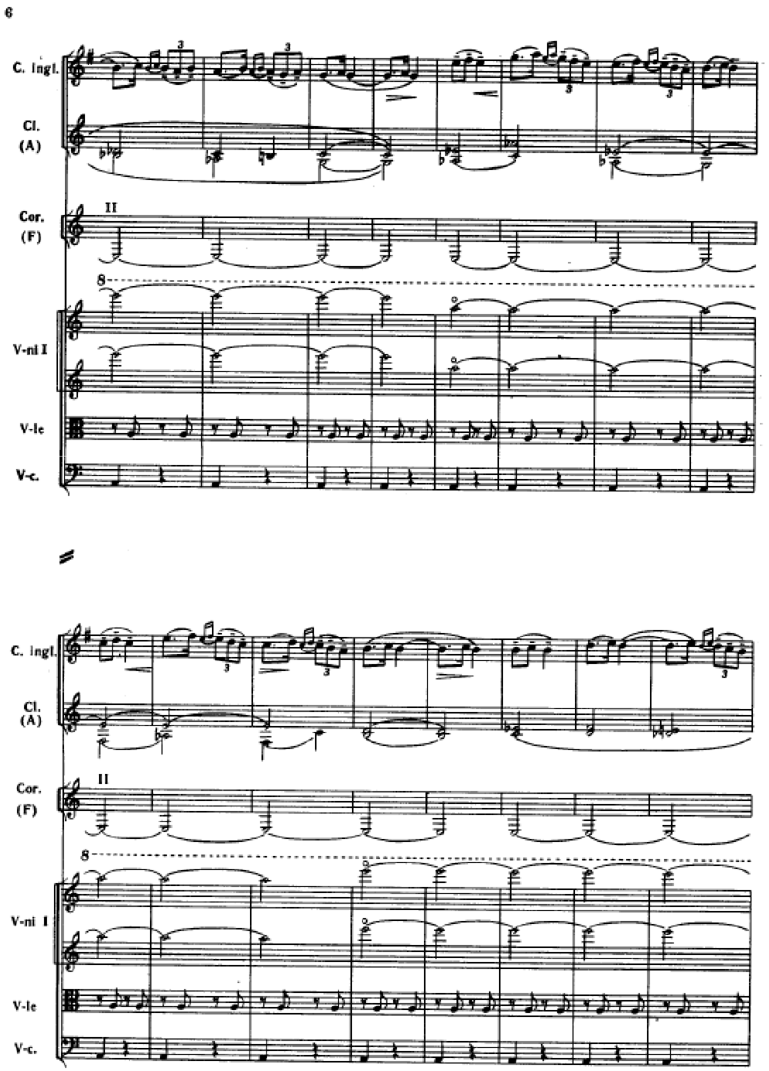

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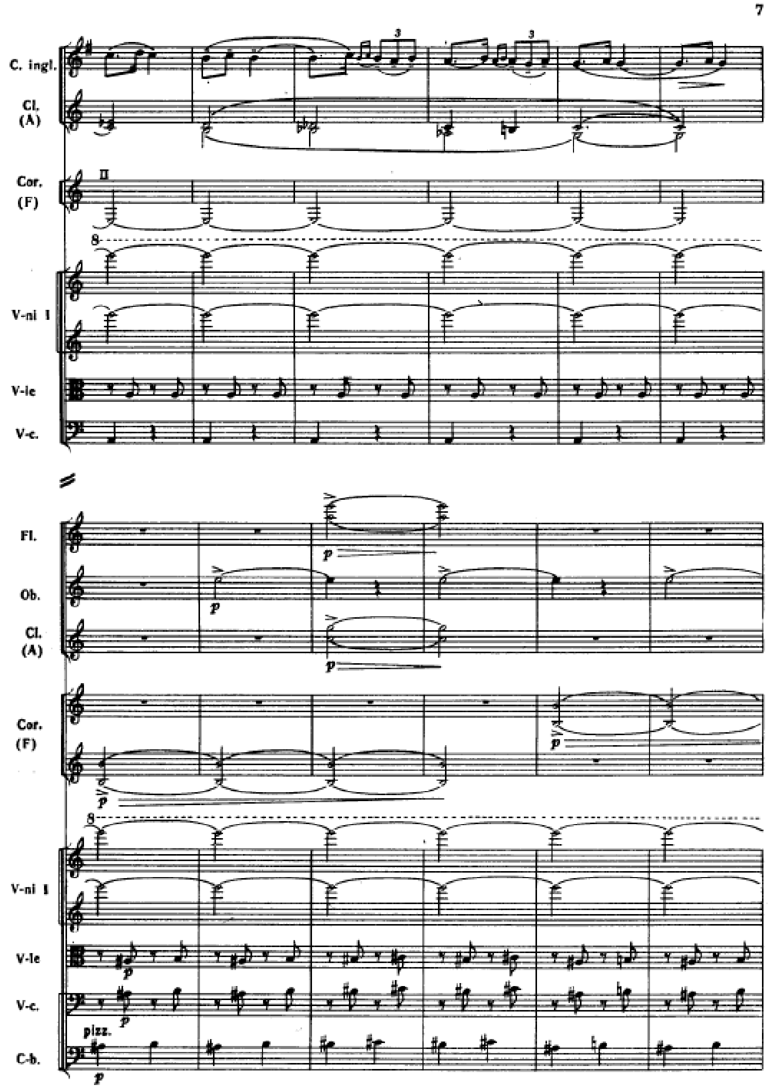

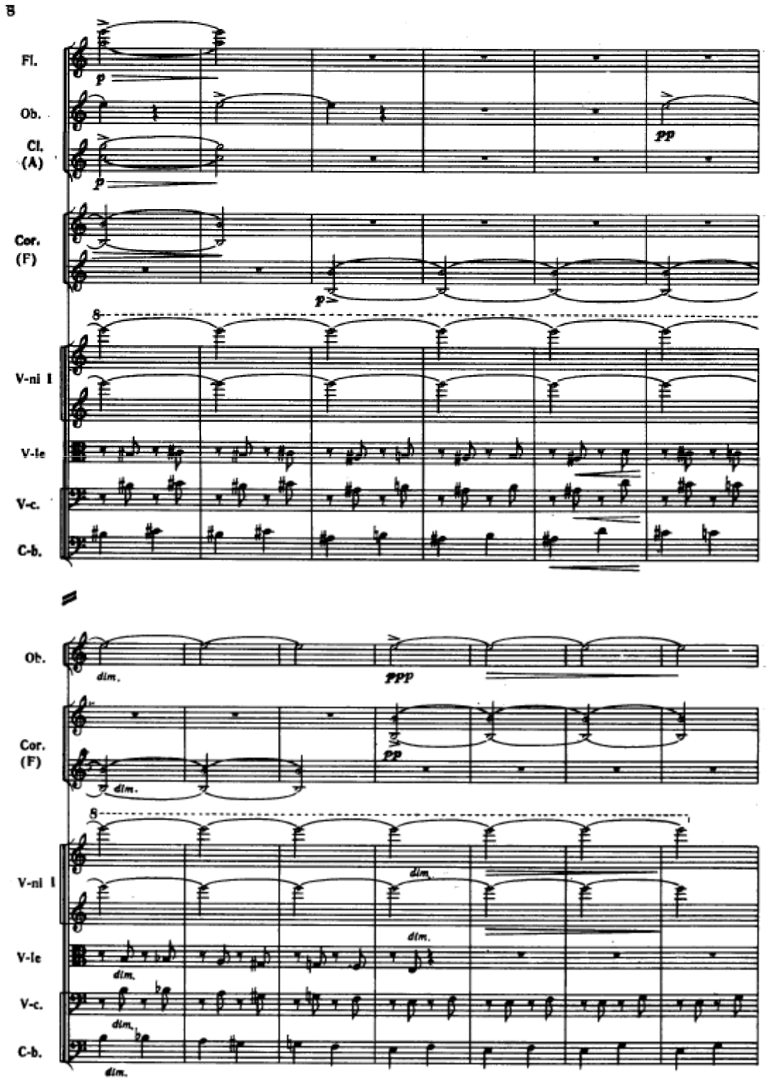

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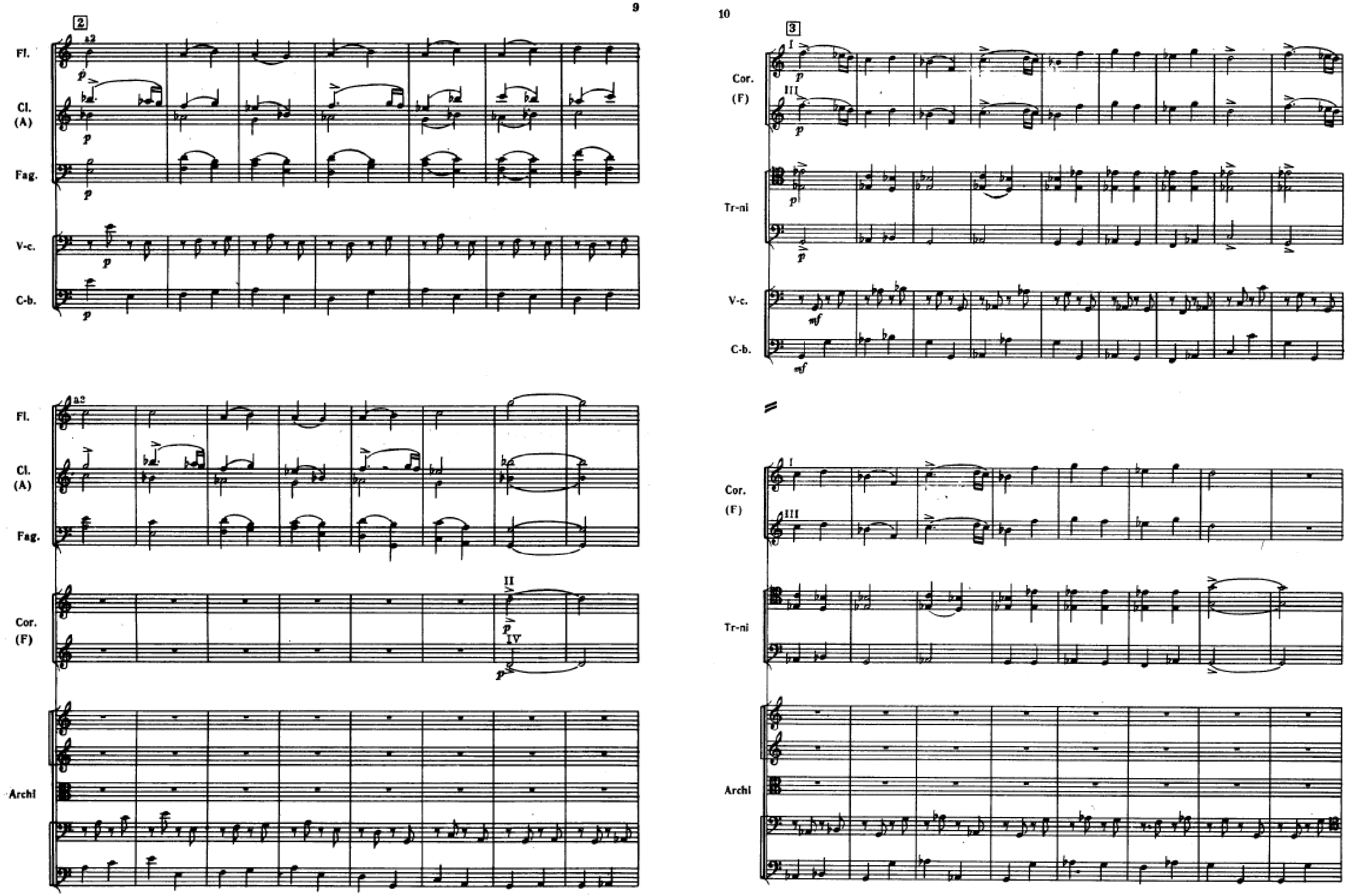
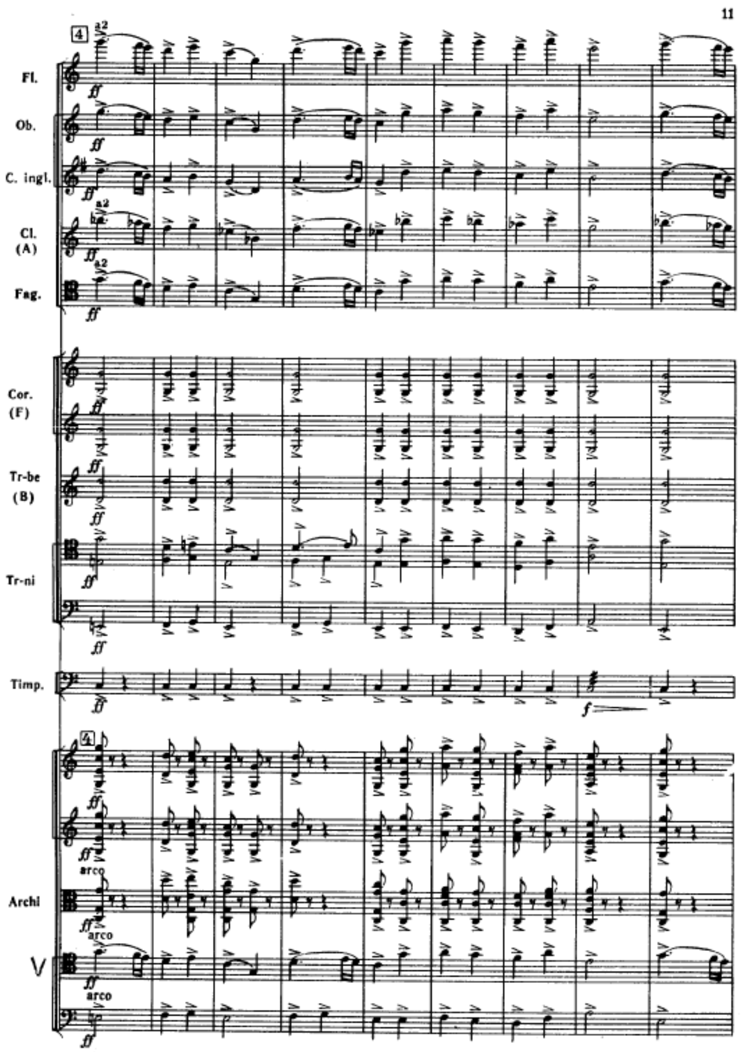
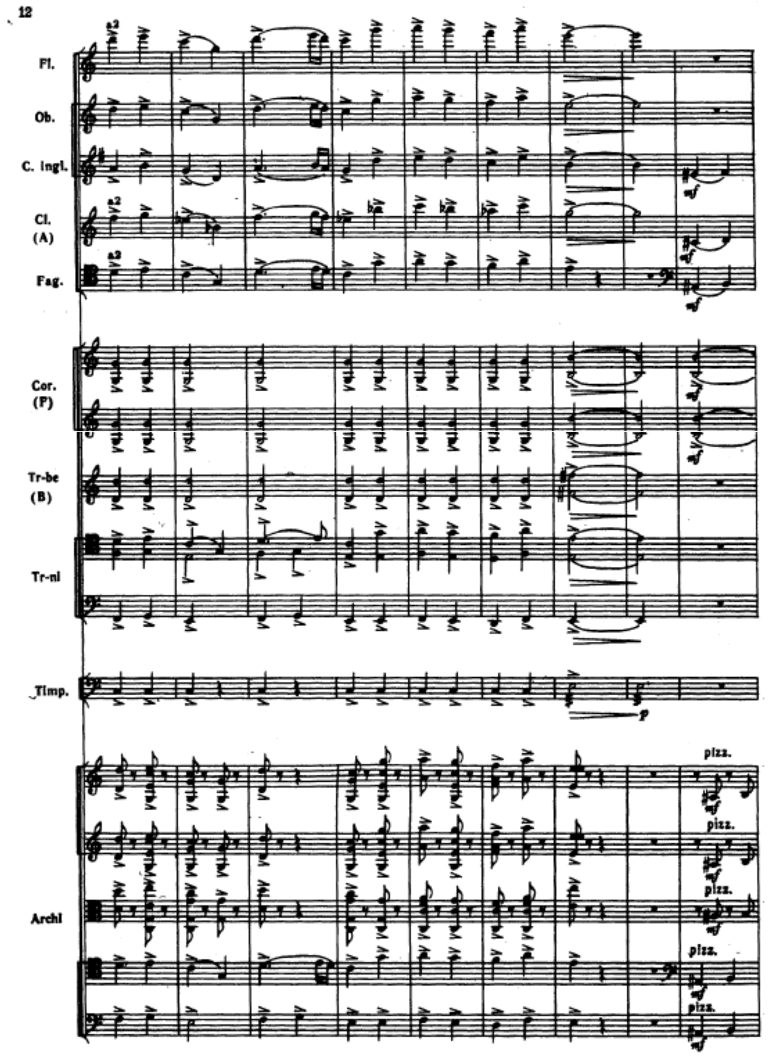


BORODIN, *IN CENTRAL ASIA*





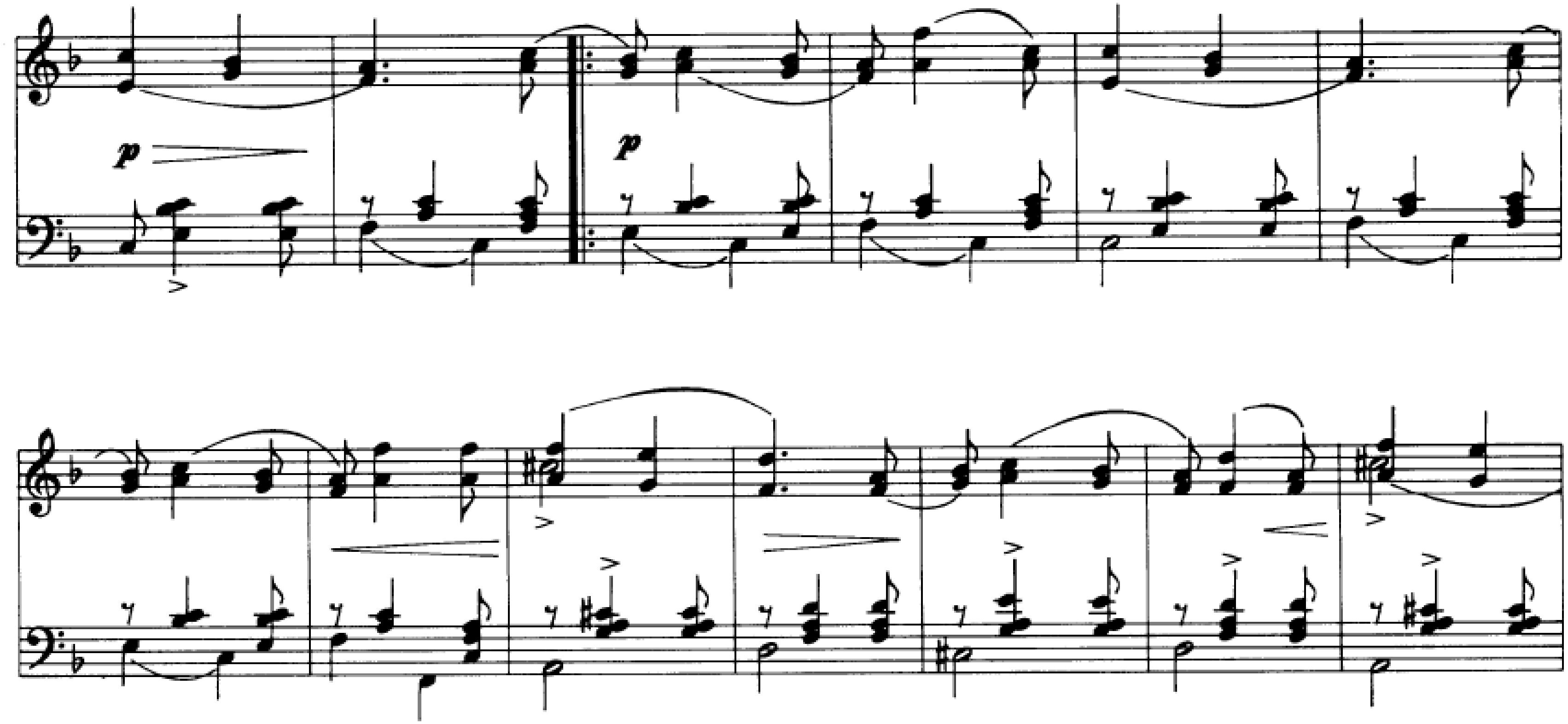
CHARACTERISTICS OF CZECH MUSIC

- First-beat accentuation (related to native speech and folk song)
- Syncopated rhythms (often related to characteristic dances)
- Lyrical passages, often as a trio in a dancelike scherzo
- Harmonic movement outlining triads a major third apart
- Two-part writing involving parallel thirds and sixths
- Oscillation between parallel major and minor modes
- Use of modes with lowered sevenths and raised fourths
- Avoidance of counterpoint
- Use of melodic cells which repeat a fifth above

Michael Beckerman, 'In search of Czechness in Music', *19th-Century Music* Vol. 10/1 (Summer 1986): 64

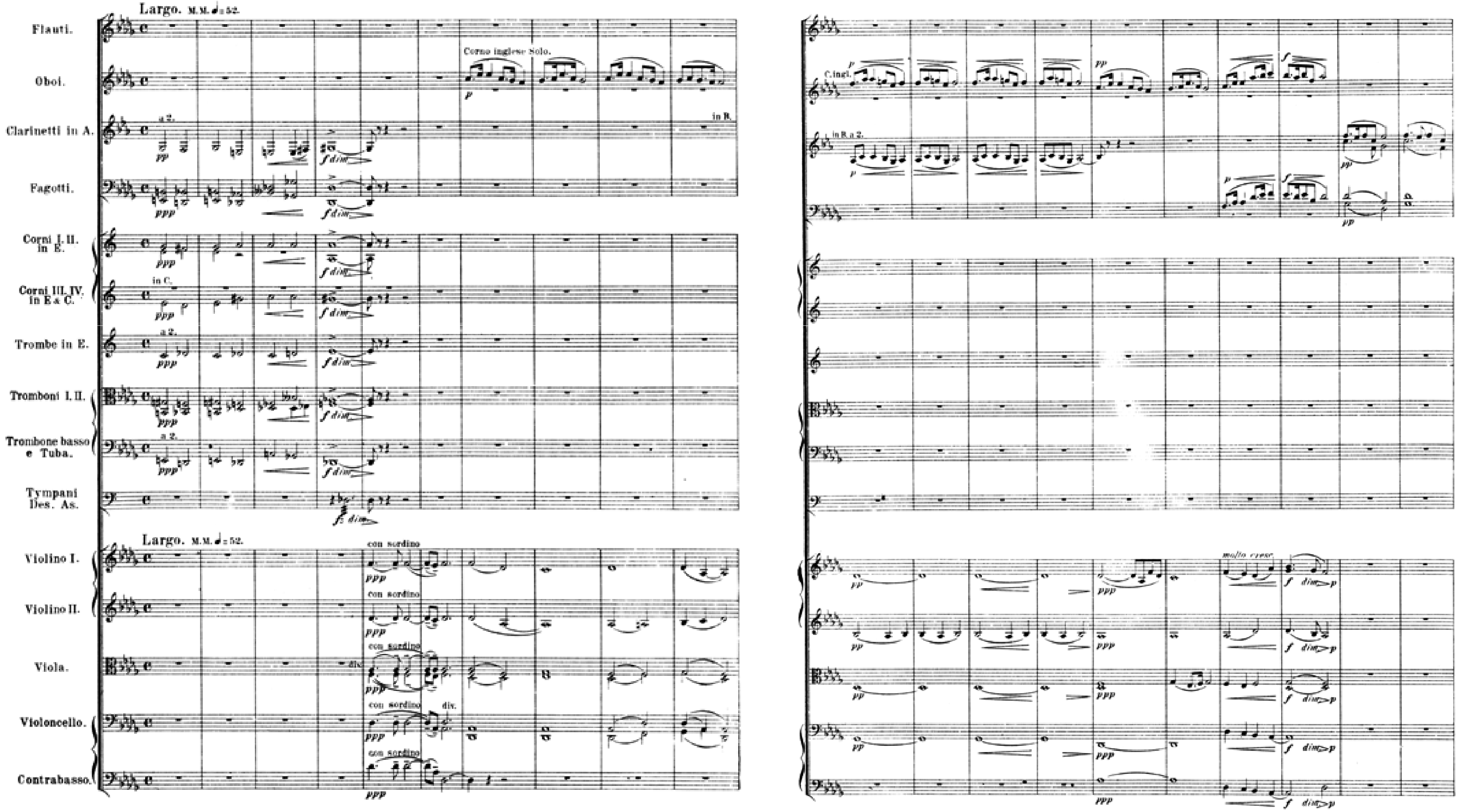
CZECHNESS INCARNATE?

Smetana, *The Bartered Bride* Act III, scene 2



Quoted in Beckerman 1986: 65

DVORAK, SYMPHONY NO. 9, LARGO



A CZECH IN AMERICA

- A while ago [1893] I suggested that inspiration for truly national music might be derived from the negro melodies or Indian chants. I was led to take this view partly by the fact that the so-called plantation songs are indeed the most striking and appealing melodies that have yet been found on this side of the water, but largely by the observation that this seems to have been recognized, though often unconsciously, by most Americans. (1254)
- I know that it is still an open question whether the inspiration derived from a few scattering melodies and folk songs can be sufficient to give a national character to higher forms of music, just as it is an open question whether national music, as such, is preferable. I myself, as I have always declared, believe firmly that the music that is most characteristic of the nation whence it springs is entitled to the highest consideration. (1256)

Antonin Dvorak, 'Music in America' (1895), in Treitler 1998: 1249-1257

A CZECH IN AMERICA

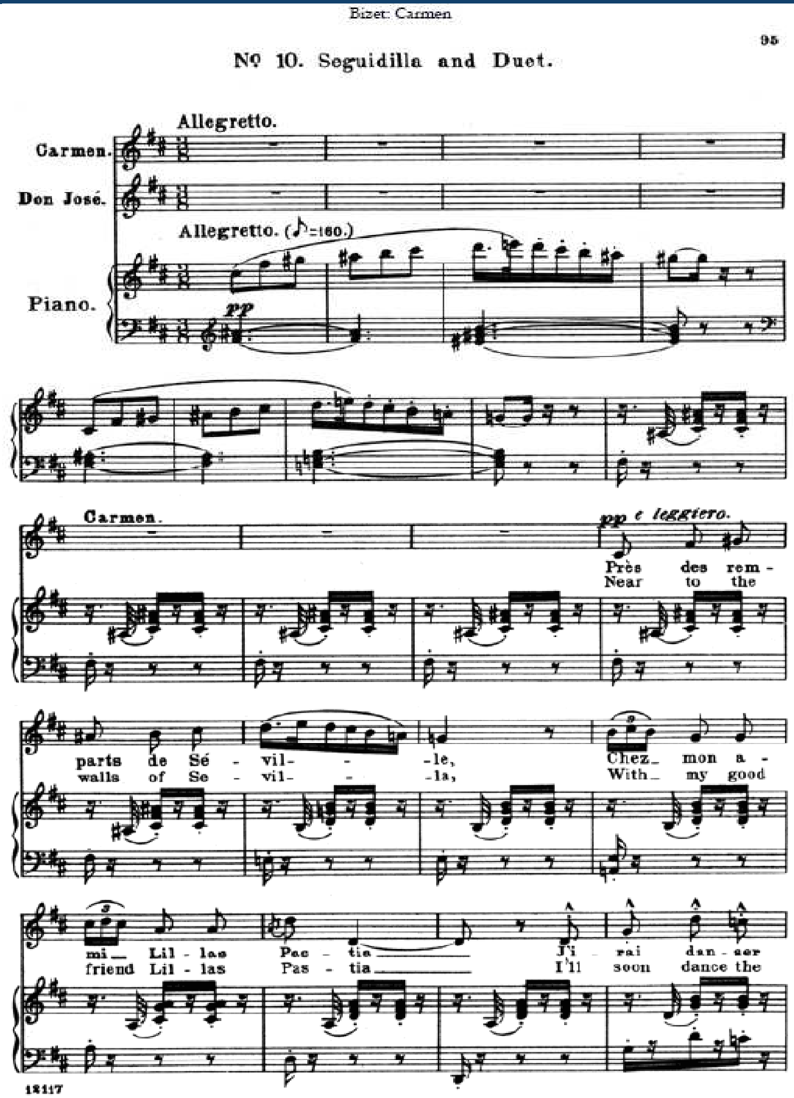
- The point has been urged that many of these touching songs, like those of Foster, have not been composed by the negroes themselves, but are the work of white men, while others did not originate on the plantation, but were imported from Africa. It seems to me that this matters but little. One might as well condemn the Hungarian Rhapsody because Liszt could not speak Hungarian. The important thing is that the inspiration for such music should come from the right source, and that the music itself should be a true expression of the people’s real feelings. (1255)
- Of course it is possible for certain composers to project their spirit into that of another race and country. Verdi partially succeeded in striking Oriental chords in his *Aida*, while Bizet was able to produce so thoroughly Spanish strains and measures as those of *Carmen*. Thus inspiration can be drawn from the depths as well as from the heights, although that is not my conception of the true mission of music. Our mission should be to give pure pleasure, and to uphold the ideas of our race. (1257)

MUSICAL EXOTICISM

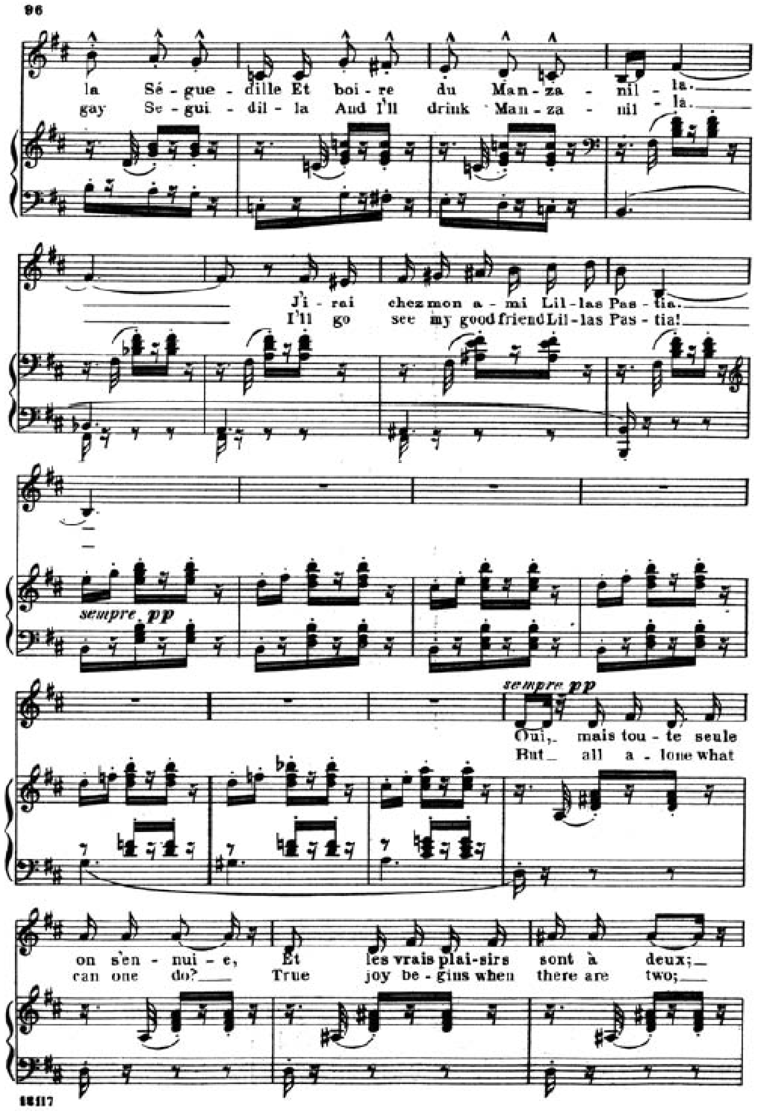
- Musical exoticism is […] the process of evoking a place (people, social milieu) that is *perceived* as different from home by the people who created the exoticist cultural product and by the people who receive it. (Locke, *Musical Exoticism*: 47)
- Locke specifically includes works which by title or content suggest the ‘exotic’, even if they do not make use of exotic style
- Markers of exotic style include the use of different modes and harmonies, bare textures, distinctive rhythmic patterns, melismatic instrumental and vocal lines, ornamentation, the use of foreign instruments or different techniques (cf Locke: 51-54, available on elearning)
- ‘we can speak of exoticism and folklorism without having to specify the folk tradition or exotic land involved. This indicates that the key issue is not the original ethnic substance of those phenomena so much as the fact that they differ from European art music, and the function they serve as deviations from the European norm.’ (Dahlhaus 1989: 306)

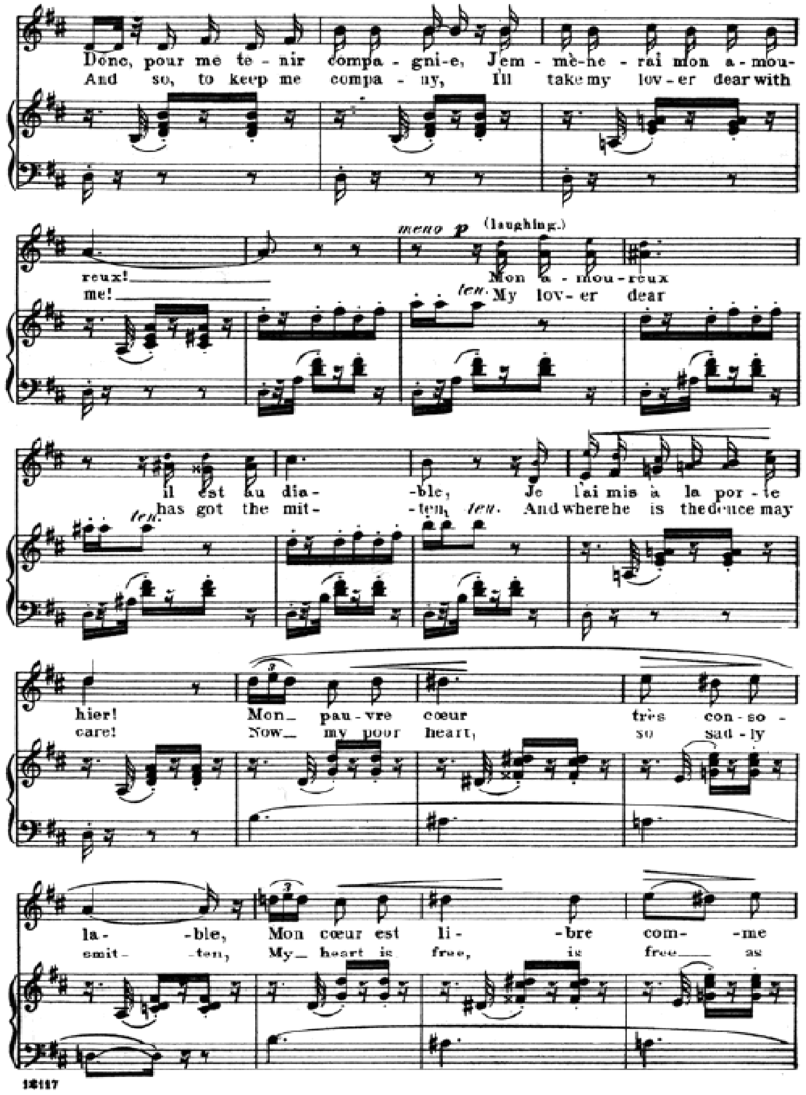
SPANISH SEDUCTION

George Bizet



SPANISH SEDUCTION





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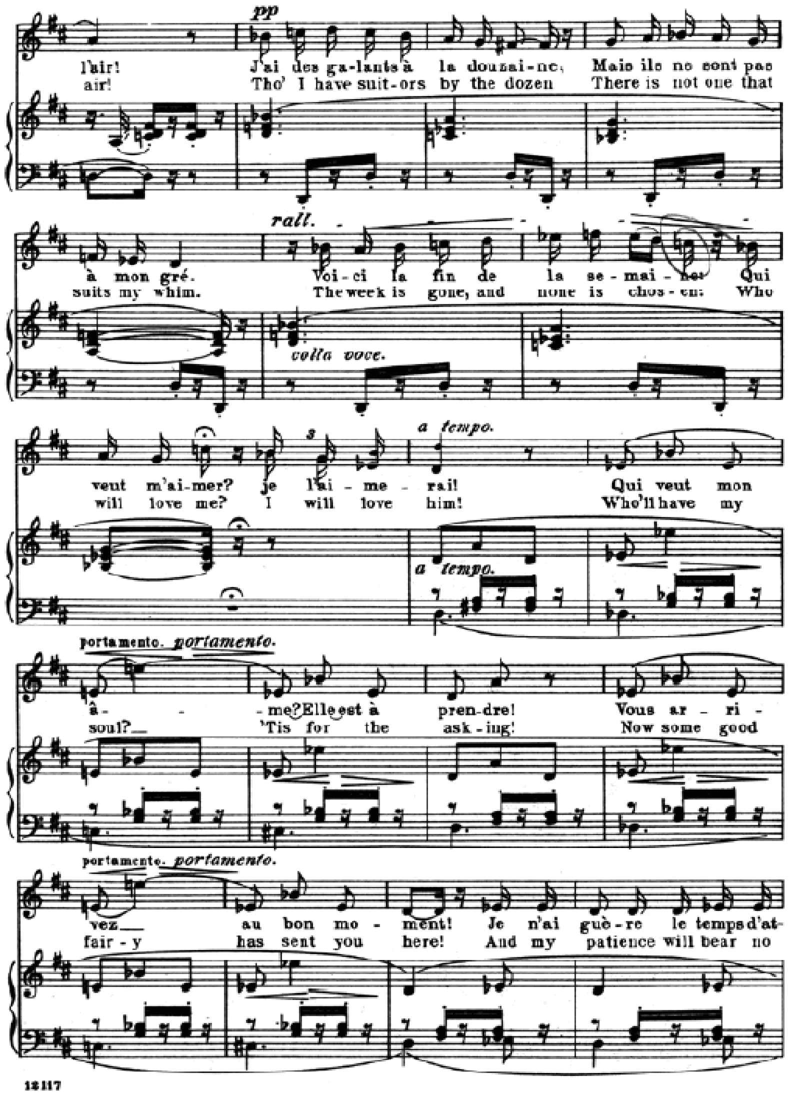
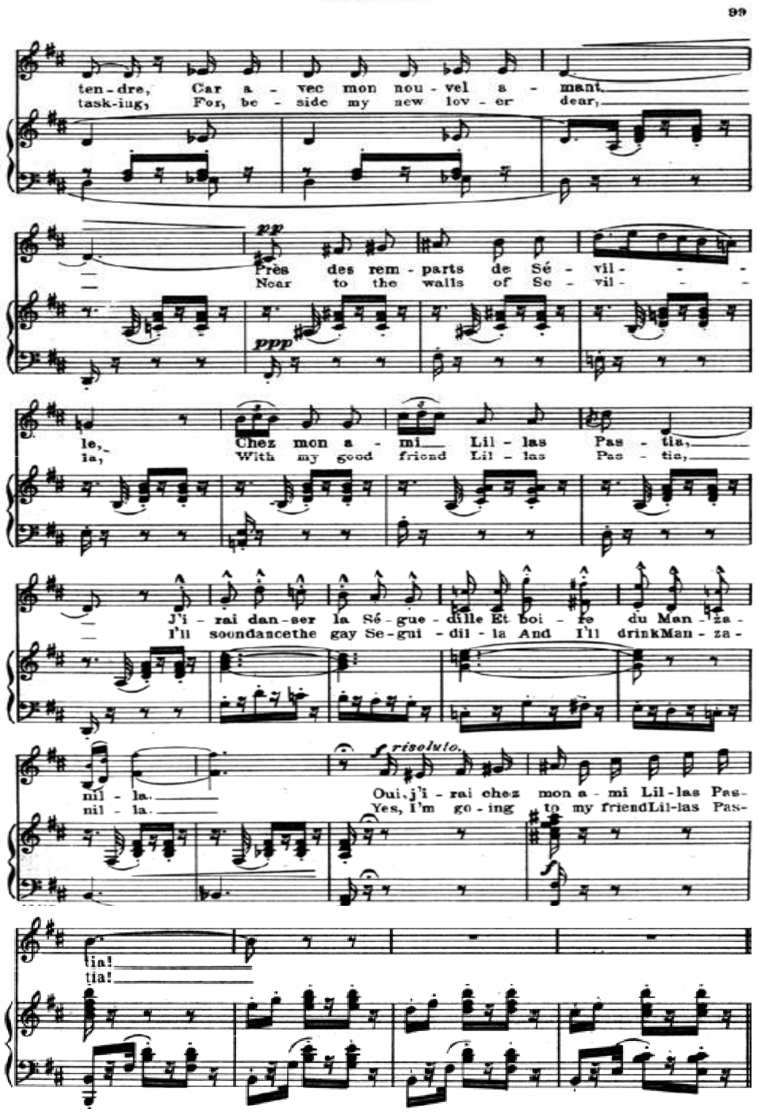
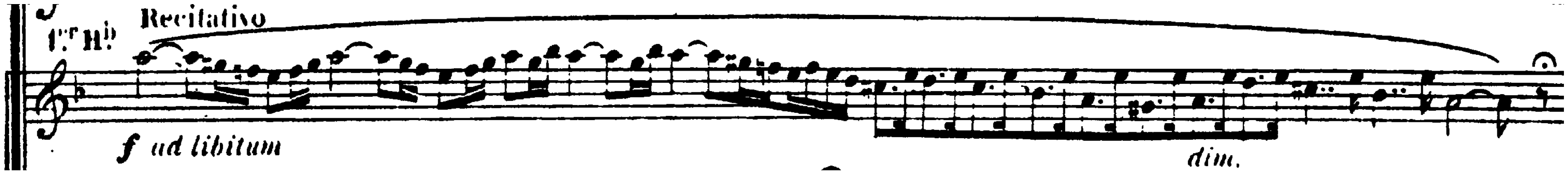
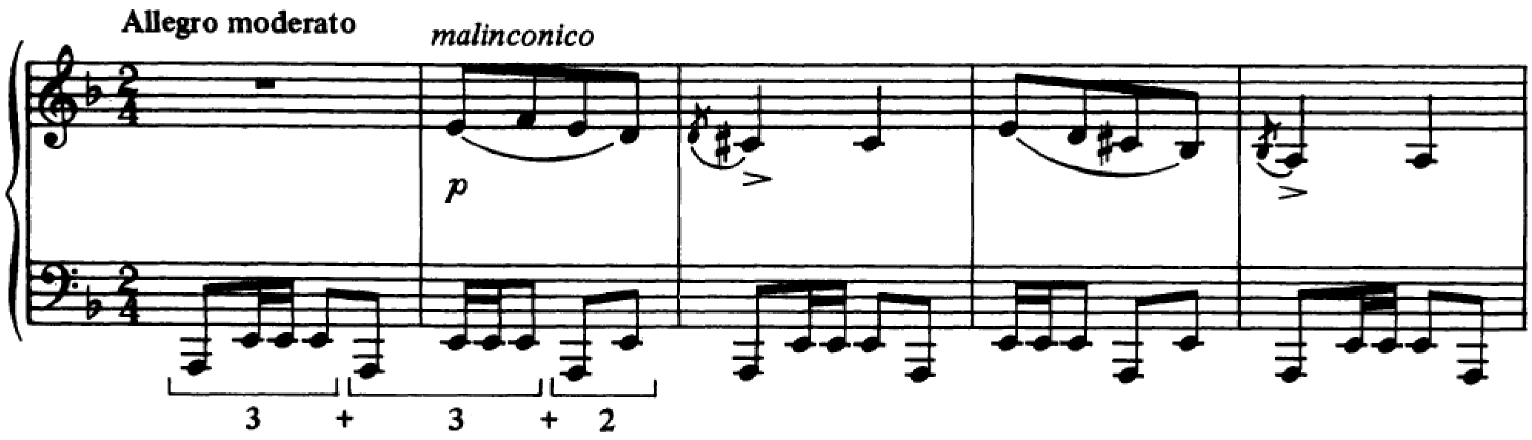
SPANISH SEDUCTION





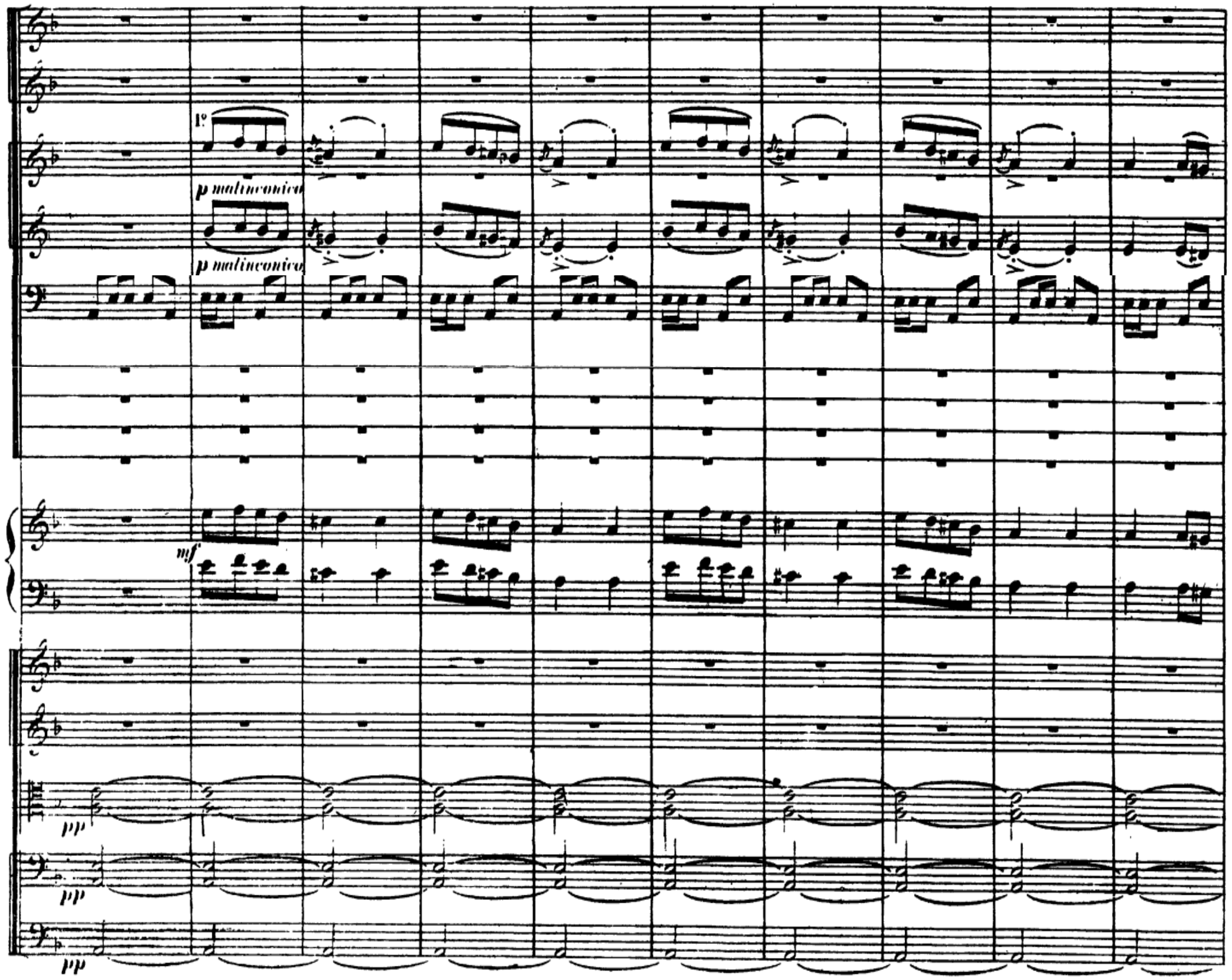
SAINT-SAËNS & THE ORIENTAL BACCHANALE





Ex. 2a. Act III, Bacchanale: melody resembling Hijāz mode.

SAINT-SAËNS & THE ORIENTAL BACCHANALE



LECTURE RECAP

- Musical nationalism was a pan-European phenomenon during the nineteenth century, not one confined to the peripheries of the continent. The latter view is a product of the covert ideology which would see the Germanic musical language and type as universals
- The evocation of nation can happen through musical folklorism (the use of folk materials from the home culture to evoke a national sound or sensibility), or through an invented tradition which then acquires the status of a ‘national idiom’
- Musical exoticism is the evocation of a remote or alien milieu. Many of the means used are similar to those associated with musical nationalism, the difference between them often dependent on standpoint of the composer and the perception of the listeners
- ‘We can speak of exoticism and folklorism per se without having to specify the folk tradition or exotic land involved. This indicates that the key issue is not the original ethnic substance of these phenomena so much as the fact that they differ from European art music, and the function that they serve as deviations from the European norm.’ (Dahlhaus 1989: 306)